



MINUTES
Strategic Planning Advisory Committee
of the Delaware Commission on Forensic Science

November 13, 2018

Division of Forensic Science - Department of Safety & Homeland Security
200 S. Adams Street, Wilmington DE, 19801
1st Floor - Conference Room

Committee Members Present:

DAG Barzilai Axelrod
Director John Evans
DNA Technical Leader Amrita Lal-Paterson
Dr. Don Lehman
ODS Lisa Schwind
Chief Toxicologist Jessica Smith

Committee Member Excused:

DAG Lisa Morris (Non-voting Commission's Legal Support)

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- DAG Axelrod called the meeting to order. Introductions were made.
 - DAG Axelrod asked members to review the 8-22-18 minutes and afterward he will ask for a motion to approve. After reading, Dr. Lehman noted there was a grammatical error "data is" which should be "data are"; Ms. Smith also noted that "DFS list" should be "DFS lists". DAG Axelrod said these minor edits are duly noted and changes will be made prior to final issue. Ms. Lal-Paterson then made a motion for approval of minutes; Dr. Lehman seconded the motion.
 - DAG Axelrod said the committee will continue the review of 2017 DFS Report in comparison to the 2015-2016 Foresight Annual Report but, moving forward after today, he thinks it would make better sense for us not to get into the weeds as a committee itself in terms of the initial data points before they are presented; would rather see us delegating to the individual disciplines. DAG Axelrod said that the data gathered could be correlated and presented together. Ms. Smith said she brought the toxicology statistics with her today; Ms. Lal-Paterson said she also has the DNA data along with Melissa Newell's FCU stats. Ms. Smith noted she received information from the Medical Examiner Unit but it did not include the forensic investigators. DAG Axelrod asked Ms. Lal-Paterson to begin with her findings.

- Ms. Lal-Paterson said she looked at the 2017 DFS Annual Report which listed 526 DNA cases based on five DNA analysts (did not include reviewers or technical reviews) and the caseload per analyst was 105; the median caseload per analyst in the Foresight report was 96. However, in looking back at DFS 2016 Annual report, the caseload per analyst was 90 (which also includes 5 analysts) so DNA is hovering around the median mark. The 2017 CODIS submissions were 2363 samples, just above Foresight report numbers. Director Evans said that in the casework load, DNA was just about median but way above the median in the number of samples. He sees the same thing occurring with the Forensic Chemistry Unit, fewer cases but more samples per case. Director Evans stated we need to look at the whole picture; saying that we are around the median makes it sound like we're okay but in reality, we're busier than this report shows - just busier doing other things. Ms. Lal-Paterson concurred. DAG Axelrod said perhaps DNA should look at what those other things might be – it would be helpful to capture for DNA purposes. DAG Axelrod said this report also does not include managers, we should include them as well as all the extraneous items that affect the workload. Ms. Schwind noted that perhaps DNA caseload has gone up because there is more use of DNA kits by police. Ms. Schwind said a lot police did not do so much testing for DNA previously but now are collecting for even property crimes. The case for argument for why there are increased caseloads here is that although the crime rate is not going up, there is much more utilization of DNA testing.
- Ms. Lal-Paterson reported numbers for the Forensic Chemistry Unit on behalf of Melissa Newell, FCU Manager. She said the 2017 report was based on cases from January to December of 2017 (should be noted that most cases were outsourced until the latter part of year) so the actual numbers may be skewed. Average number of cases per chemist was 94. Samples per analyst were 326; all below median. Due to outsourcing of cases, a true picture of 2016 and 2017 cannot be obtained. Ms. Smith suggested FCU use 2018 numbers – calculate actual number of cases divided by actual number of chemists, then project out. In fact, she said, we all agree that FCU is now sufficiently staffed so perhaps we need not spend a lot more time on calculating FCU numbers regarding staffing needs.
- Jessica Smith reported that Tox figures may be a bit confusing because the numbers are based on three separate disciplines - blood alcohol, toxicology ante-mortem (excluding blood alcohol), and toxicology post-mortem (excluding blood alcohol). She said the blood alcohol testing is straight forward but the drug testing is time-consuming and challenging. Tox performed in 2017: 7021 tests, of which 1783 were alcohol and 75% were the more challenging tests for ante and post-mortem. For this project, they looked at number of tests and number of reports (the test workload for chemists and the report workload for herself). and figured a way to capture it all. A long discussion followed concerning how to figure formulas for each discipline in order to identify if there is adequate staffing in each.
- DAG Axelrod suggested everyone keep working on the statistics presented today and then we can put the data points together and come up with the average number of cases in a particular format. From that point, he said, then we can figure out how it all fits into a chart. Once the Committee is able to determine what data categories we are generating, the Committee can then look to expand it to other years.
- Dr. Lehman moved to adjourn the meeting; Ms. Lal-Paterson seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned.